

Message Text

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43

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 DPW-01 IO-14 AID-20 DRC-01 SAJ-01 /129 W

----- 035090

P R 211220Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0995

INFO AMCONSUL BIEN HOA

AMCONSUL CAN THO

AMCONSUL DANANG

AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

CINCPAC

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY MANILA

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

USAAG NKP THAILAND

USDEL JEC PARIS

USUN 596

UNCLAS SAIGON 00944

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, MIL VS, CH

SUB: SAIGON MEDIA TREATMENT OF PARACELS ISSUE, JANUARY 20 AND 21

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

REF: SAIGON 0859

1. MOST SAIGON DAILIES JAN 20 HAVE LIGHT TREATMENT TO PARACELS
ISSUE. MOST FRONT PAGES WERE DOMINATED BY SPECIAL TET FEATURES,
NEWS OF CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS, AND REPORTS OF THE REVN'S OFFER OF
GENERAL ELECTIONS MADE AT PARIS BILATERALS. STORIES ON THE PARACELS
WERE BRIEF FACTUAL ACCOUNTS OF MANEUVERING BY RVN AND PRC VESSELS
AND ACTIVITIES OF AN RVN LANDING PARTY ON DUNCAN ISLAND AS OF
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JAN 18.

2. DAN CHU DAILY, ORGAN OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S DEMOCRACY PARTY, GAVE HEADLINES AND LEAD STORY TO THE PARACELS ON JANUARY 20. THE LEAD STORY, HEADLINED "VIETNAMESE NAVY SINKS RED CHINESE SHIP IN PARACELS,"

WAS BASED ON LATE REPORTS THAT A VIETNAMESE NAVY (VNN) VESSEL HAD SUNK A PRC SHIP AFTER THE LATTER OPENED FIRE. THE DAN CHU STORY CLEARLY CAST THE CHINESE IN THE ROLE OF AGGRESSOR, SAYING AT ONE POINT THAT "RVN ARMED FORCES HAVE DESPATCHED ADDITIONAL SHIPS, AIRCRAFT AND TROOPS TO REINFORCE THE PARACELS ISLANDS IN ORDER TO DEFEND THEM IN THE FACE OF THE RED CHINESE INTENTION TO VIOLATE THE TERRITORIAL SOVEREIGNTY OF THE RVN."

3. JANUARY 21 BEING THE MONDAY BEFORE TET, ONLY FIVE SAIGON DAILIES PUBLISHED JANUARY 21 EDITIONS. FOUR GAVE SUBSTANTIAL FRONT-PAGE COVERAGE

TO PARACELS DEVELOPMENTS. (OPPOSITION DIEN TIN DEVOTED ITS ENTIRE FRONT PAGE TO OPPOSITION LEGISLATORS' PROTESTS AGAINST APPROVAL OF CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS.)

STORIES ON PARACELS WERE BASED ON GVN SOURCES AND WESTERN WIRE SERVICES. STORIES FOCUSED ON EXCHANGES OF NAVAL GUNFIRE ON JAN 19, WHEN ONE RVN VESSEL WAS SUNK (WITH 100 HANDS STILL MISSING) AND ONE PRC VESSEL (WHICH CARRIES A COMPLEMENT OF 110) WAS SUNK.

SOME STORIES GAVE SKETCHY ACCOUNTS OF THE WITHDRAWAL OF RVN FORCES FROM DUNCAN ISLAND WHEN IT BECAME APPARENT THAT IT WAS OUTNUMBERED BY CHINESE FORCE.

THERE WERE NO REPORTS OF OTHER RVN LOSSES OR CASUALTIES. (PREVIOUS DAY'S EDITIONS HAD REPORTED THREE VIETNAMESE DEAD AND TWO WOUNDED WHEN THE RVN LANDING PARTY EXCHANGED GUNFIRE WITH PRC TROOPS.)

NEWS STORIES LEFT THE CLEAR IMPRESSION THAT THE RVN GAVE AS GOOD AS IT

GOT, AND THAT WHILE RVN TROOPS WITHDREW THE VIETNAMESE NAVY WAS STILL HANGING IN THERE.

4. RELATED WIRE SERVICE STORIES JAN 21 REPORTED THE GRC STATEMENT THAT THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA OWNS THE PARACELS AND US STATE DEPT UNCLASSIFIED

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STATEMENT THAT USG IS NOT A PARTY TO THE PARACELS DISPUTE. DAN CHU DAILY CARRIED THE FULL TEXT OF THE GVN FOREIGN MINISTRY'S JAN 19 STATEMENT DENOUNCING THE PRC FOR HAVING "BRAZENLY ENCROACHED ON RVN TERRITORY" (FULL TEXT REPORTED IN FBIS SAIGON S-191325).

5. THERE WAS NO EDITORIAL COMMENT ON THE PARACELS ISSUE IN JAN 20 AND 21 PAPERS.

6. ALL SAIGON DAILIES RECESSED FOR THE TET PERIOD AS OF JAN 21 AND WILL NOT REAPPEAR UNTIL AFTER JAN 26.

7. SAIGON RADIO AND TELEVISION HAVE CONTINUED TAKING A VERY STRONG POSITION AGAINST THE CHINESE FOR VIOLATING RVN SOVEREIGNTY AND AGAINST

THE DRV LEADERSHIP FOR ITS SILENCE IN THE FACE OF AGGRESSION FROM VIETNAM'S TRADITIONAL CHINESE ARMY. A JAN 19 COMMENTARY GAVE NUMEROUS

HISTORICAL REFERENCES TO AVOKE MEMORIES OF VIETNAMESE DEFENDING THEIR HOMELAND AGAINST CHINESE (FULL TEXT REPORTED FBIS SAIGON S-190543.)

THE ATTITUDE AND ACTS OF THE CHINESE WERE SAID TO "CONSTITUTE A CHALLENGE, A PROVOCATION TO ALL THOSE IN WHOM VIETNAMESE BLOOD STILL CIRCULATES AND WHO STILL MAINTAIN THE UNSUBMISSIVE TRADITION OF OUR ANCESTORS." DRV LEADERS WERE CALLED "A HERD OF RUNNING DOGS" AND TRAITORS WHO ARE "HUMBLY BOWING TO THE EXTREMELY ARROGANT AND ILLOGICAL DEMANDS OF THEIR BOSSES, THE RED CHINESE."

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